



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

September 18, 2015

Dear Partners:

On September 14, 2015, we issued a policy statement that sets a vision and provides recommendations to States, local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, and public and private early childhood programs, for increasing the inclusion of children with disabilities ages birth through five in high-quality early childhood programs. It is the Departments' position that all young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs where they are provided appropriate services and supports in meeting high expectations.

Despite a strong legal foundation and research base supporting the benefits of inclusion for children with and without disabilities, many young children with disabilities do not have access to, nor participate in, high-quality early childhood programs. Given the growing attention to expanding access to high-quality early childhood programs, the time is right to ensure that young children with disabilities are included in these efforts, and together with their peers without disabilities, and they reap the benefits of participation in high-quality early childhood programs.

Through the policy statement we released, we aim to support and encourage States, early childhood programs and schools, teachers and providers, national professional organizations, advocates, and families to take action to expand access to high-quality inclusive early childhood programs for all children. This policy statement is one effort in a series of Federal actions promoting the inclusion of young children with disabilities in high-quality early childhood programs. The Departments intend to work with our partners in the community to raise public awareness and identify resources to support high-quality programming and inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood programs.

Together we can make progress in increasing inclusive early learning opportunities for young children with disabilities, and in doing so, achieve greater outcomes for all children. We hope that States and local communities will share the Departments' vision that all people with disabilities be meaningfully included in all facets of society, starting at birth, and partner with us to build a stronger and more comprehensive early childhood system that sets a trajectory for their inclusion and positive outcomes across the course of their lives. Thank you for the work you do on behalf of children and families across America.

Sincerely,

/s/

Arne Duncan, Secretary
U.S. Department of Education

/s/

Sylvia Matthews Burwell, Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services